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Republicans say there's a 'lack of urgency' from White House

By LISA MASCARO, STEPHEN GROVES and FARNOUSH AMIRI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Debt ceiling negotiators for President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy traded more budget-cutting ideas at the Capitol Tuesday, but Republicans warned of a "lack of urgency" at the White House to resolve the standoff in time to avert a potentially chaotic federal default.

With barely a week to go before a deadline as soon as June 1 the Democratic president and the Republican speaker were staring down a financial crisis. Failure to strike a deal would be unprecedented, and certain to throw U.S. financial markets into turmoil, inflicting economic pain at home and abroad. Markets lowered Tuesday with no deal in sight.

"We're not there yet," McCarthy said at the Capitol, reiterating he won't bring any bill forward "that doesn't spend less than we spent this year." Behind closed doors, McCarthy urged his slim House Republican majority to "just stick together" despite their own factions as he negotiates the strongest deal possible for conservatives, said lawmakers exiting the private session. He told reporters the teams are eyeing "creative" ways of rolling back spending that all sides can accept.

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Top Republican debt crisis mediators Rep. Garret Graves, R-La., left, and Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., center, chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, have a laugh as they stop for questions by reporters on progress in the talks with the Biden administration, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, May 23, 2023. Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, a member of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, joins at upper right.

Associated Press

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Republicans say there's a 'lack of urgency' from White House



House Speaker Kevin McCarthy of Calif., speaks to reporters, Tuesday, May 23, 2023, as returns to his office from the House floor on Capitol Hill in Washington, as debt limit negotiations continue.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

"I believe we can still get there — and get there before June 1," McCarthy, R-Calif., said at midday. Dragging into a third week, the negotiations over raising the nation's debt limit, now at \$31 trillion, were never supposed to arrive at this point — a crisis in the making. From the White House, press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said it was "ridiculous" to suggest Biden wasn't acting with urgency. "He wants to see this done as soon as possible," she said. The White House insisted early on it was unwilling to barter over the need to pay the nation's bills, demanding that Congress simply lift the ceiling as it has done many times before with no strings attached. But the newly elected speaker urged the president at an Oval Office meeting in February to come to the negotiating table on a budget package that would reduce spending to reduce ballooning deficits in the post-COVID era in exchange

for the vote to allow future debt. Both men said after a crucial meeting late Monday at the White House — after the president returned from the Group of Seven summit in Japan — that talks were productive. But with time short to strike a deal, they are laboring to come up with a compromise that could be approved quickly by the Republican House and the Democratic Senate and be signed into law. Negotiations are focused on finding agreement over a 2024 budget year limit. Republicans have set aside their demand to rollback spending to 2022 levels, but say that next year's government spending must be less than it is now. But the White House instead is offering to freeze spending at current 2023 numbers. Agreement on that top-line spending level is vital. It would enable McCarthy to deliver spending restraint for conservatives while not being so severe that it would chase off the Democratic votes that would be needed in the divided

Congress to pass any bill. "We are holding firm to the speaker's red line," said a top Republican negotiator, Rep. Garret Graves of Louisiana. "Which is that we will not do a deal unless it spends less money than we're spending this year." The White House continues to argue that deficits can be reduced by ending tax breaks for wealthier households and some corporations, but McCarthy said he told the president at their February meeting that raising revenue from tax hikes is off the table. The negotiators are now also debating the duration of a 1% cap on annual spending growth going forward, with Republicans dropping their demand for a 10-year cap to six years, but the White House offering only one year, for 2025. Typically, the debt ceiling has been lifted for the duration of a budget deal, and in this negotiation the White House is angling for a two-year agreement that would push past the presidential elections. Another main Republican negotiator, Rep. Patrick

McHenry of North Carolina, who joined the speaker at the Oval Office Monday evening, said, "What I sense from the White House is a lack of urgency." But on the Senate side, Republican leader Mitch McConnell said, "Look, I think everybody needs to relax." Traveling in his home state of Kentucky, McConnell said of the back and forth, "This is not that unusual." However, time is growing short. The House speaker promised lawmakers he will abide by the rule to post any bill for 72 hours before voting, making any action doubtful until the weekend — just days before the potential deadline. The Senate would also have to pass the package before it could go to Biden's desk to be signed. McCarthy faces a hard-right flank in his own party that is likely to reject any deal, and that has led some Democrats to encourage Biden to resist any compromise with the Republicans and simply invoke the 14th Amendment to raise the debt ceiling on his own, an unprecedented and legal-

ly fraught action the president has resisted for now. On Tuesday, the leader of the conservative House Freedom Caucus Rep. Scott Perry said: "We all want to stick together. But again, it's sticking together around the right thing." He and others are skeptical of the June 1 deadline that Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said is when "it is highly likely" the government will be unable to pay all the nation's bills. Treasury said Tuesday it is keeping in close contact with federal agencies on their planned spending as it monitors cashflows. As the negotiators focus on the \$100 billion-plus difference between the 2022 and 2023 spending plans as a place to cut, other priorities Republicans are pushing as part of the deal remain on the table. Republicans also want to beef up work requirements for government aid to recipients in the Medicaid health care program, though the Biden administration has countered that millions of people could lose coverage. The GOP additionally wants new cuts to food aid by restricting states' ability to waive work requirements in places with high joblessness. But Democrats have said any changes to work requirements are nonstarters. GOP lawmakers are also seeking cuts in IRS funding and, by sparing defense and veterans accounts from reductions, would shift the bulk of spending reductions to other federal programs. The White House has countered by keeping defense and nondefense spending flat next year, which would save \$90 billion in the 2024 budget year and \$1 trillion over 10 years. All sides have been eyeing the potential for the package to include a framework to ease federal regulations and speed energy project developments. They are all but certain to claw back some \$30 billion in unspent COVID-19 funds now that the pandemic emergency has officially lifted. □

Missouri man accused of deliberately crashing U-Haul truck into security barrier near White House

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Missouri man flew to Washington, rented a U-Haul truck and drove straight to the White House, where he crashed the truck into a security barrier and began waving around a Nazi flag in the culmination of a six-month plan to “seize power” from the government, authorities said Tuesday.

Sai Varshith Kandula, 19, removed the flag from a backpack shortly after smashing the box truck into the barrier near the north side of Lafayette Square on Monday around 10 p.m., according to charging documents. He was quickly arrested by a U.S. Park Police officer who rushed to the scene of the crash and saw him take out the flag. Kandula later told Secret Service agents that he’d flown from St. Louis on a one-way ticket that night after months of planning. He wanted to “get to the White House, seize power, and be put in charge of the nation,” and he said he would “kill the president, if that’s what I have to do,” charges state.

Kandula, who is from the St. Louis suburb of Chesterfield, Missouri, said he bought the flag online because he admires the Nazis’ “great history” as well as their “authoritarian nature, eugenics, and their one world order.”

No one was injured in the crash. No explosives or weapons were found in the truck or on Kandula.

Kandula rented the U-Haul in Herndon, Virginia, and had a valid contract in his own name, the company said. People can rent a truck from U-Haul at age 18, and there were no red flags on his rental record that would have prevented the contract, according to U-Haul.

A witness, Chris Zaboji, said the driver smashed into the barrier at least twice. Zaboji, a 25-year-old pilot who lives in Washington, was finishing a run close by Lafayette Square when he



A box truck is seen crashed into a security barrier at a park across from the White House, Monday night, May 22, 2023 in Washington.

Associated Press

heard the loud crash of the U-Haul truck hitting the barrier. He said he took out his phone and captured the moment the truck struck the barrier again before he heard sirens approaching. “When the van backed up and rammed it again, I decided I wanted to get out of there,” he said.

Officers from the Secret Service and the Metropolitan Police Department searched the truck after the crash. Video posted by WUSA-TV shows a police officer at the scene picking up and inventorying several pieces of evidence from the truck, including a Nazi flag.

Kandula was arrested on multiple charges, and prosecutors charged him with damaging U.S. property.

Biden was briefed on the crash Tuesday morning by the Secret Service and Park Police, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. “He’s relieved that no one was injured last night,” she said.

The U.S. Secret Service monitors hundreds of people who have made threats to the president, but it’s not clear whether Kandula was on their radar at all or if he had threatened the president before, which would trigger the Secret Service’s involvement.

No attorney was listed for Kandula in court records, multiple telephone numbers listed under his surname in public records were out of service, and

efforts by The Associated Press to reach relatives who could speak on his behalf

on Tuesday were not immediately successful. People at a Missouri home listed as

being associated with Kandula would not speak with an AP reporter.

Lafayette Square offers perhaps the best view of the White House available to the public, and Kandula sent multiple people running when he drove onto the sidewalk to reach the barrier.

The square has also long been one of the nation’s most prominent venues for demonstrations. The park was closed for nearly a year after federal authorities fenced off the area at the height of nationwide protests over policing following the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, but it reopened in May 2021. □



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Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks during a news conference to sign several bills related to public education and increases in teacher pay, in Miami, on May 9, 2023.

Associated Press

**By BRENDAN FARRINGTON
Associated Press**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — A group of Chinese citizens living and working in Florida sued the state Monday over a new law that bans Chinese nationals from purchasing property in large swaths of the state.

The law applies to properties within 10 miles (16 kilometers) of military installations and other "critical infrastructure" and also affects citizens of Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Iran, Russia, and North Korea. But Chinese citizens and those sell-

ing property to them face the harshest penalties. The prohibition also applies to agricultural land.

The American Civil Liberties Union says the law will have a substantial chilling effect on sales to Chinese and Asian people who can legally buy property. The suit says the law unfairly equates Chinese people with the actions of their government and there is no evidence of national security risk from Chinese citizens buying Florida property.

The law "will codify and

Florida sued for restricting Chinese citizens, other foreigners from buying property

expand housing discrimination against people of Asian descent in violation of the Constitution and the Fair Housing Act," the ACLU said in a news release announcing the suit. "It will also cast an undue burden of suspicion on anyone seeking to buy property whose name sounds remotely Asian, Russian, Iranian, Cuban, Venezuelan, or Syrian."

U.S.-China ties are strained amid growing tensions over security and trade. In nearly a dozen statehouses and Congress, a decades-old worry about foreign land ownership has spiked since a Chinese spy balloon traversed the skies from Alaska to South Carolina last month.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is expected to launch a presidential campaign this week, signed the bill May 8. His office didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

The law is set to take effect July 1. It will be a felony for Chinese people to buy property in restricted areas or for any person or real estate company to knowingly sell to restricted people. For the other targeted nations, the penalty is a mis-

demeanor for buyers and sellers. It applies to military installations as well as infrastructure like airports and seaports, water and wastewater treatment plants, natural gas and oil processing facilities, power plants, spaceports, and telecommunications central switching offices.

The ACLU says the law "will have the net effect of creating 'Chinese exclusion zones' that will cover immense portions of Florida, including many of the state's most densely populated and developed areas."

"This impact is exactly what laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the California Alien Land Law of 1913 did more than a hundred years ago," the lawsuit says.

Those on the restricted list that already own property near critical infrastructure must register with the state or face fines of up to \$1,000 a day. They're also prohibited from acquiring additional property. The law has provisions to allow the state to seize property from violators. The number of states restricting foreign ownership of agricultural land has risen by 50% this year.

Heading into 2023, 14 states had laws restricting foreign ownership or investments in private agricultural land. So far this year, restrictive laws also have been enacted in Arkansas, Idaho, Montana, Tennessee, Utah and Virginia.

Foreign land ownership has become "a political flashpoint," said Micah Brown, a staff attorney for the National Agricultural Law Center at the University of Arkansas.

Brown said the recent surge in state laws targeting land ownership by foreign entities stems from some highly publicized cases of Chinese-connected companies purchasing land near military bases. Earlier this year, the U.S. Air Force said that the Fufeng Group's planned \$700 million wet corn milling plant near a base in Grand Forks, North Dakota, poses a "significant threat to national security."

After a Chinese army veteran and real estate tycoon bought a wind farm near an Air Force base in Texas, that state responded in 2021 by banning infrastructure deals with individuals tied to hostile governments, including China. □

Millionaire's elaborate jail escape plan foiled

**By FREIDA FRISARO
Associated Press**

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Authorities say they've foiled an elderly businessman's plan to escape a Florida jail and return to France where he had previously fled in an attempt to avoid child pornography charges.

A tip from outside the jail sparked a two-month investigation of John Manchec, 78, and people he had enlisted in his escape plan, Indian River County Sheriff Eric Flowers said Monday during a news conference. "Essentially, the plan comes down to this," Sheriff Flowers said. "These folks that are on the outside are going to wait until Manchec has a doctor's visit, and

they are going to take out our corrections staff while he's out at the medical facility."

The plan called for Manchec's employees to pepper-spray prison guards and take him to his private plane in nearby Fort Pierce, so that he could fly to France, Flowers said.

Manchec is a multimillionaire with dual U.S. and French citizenship, Flowers said.

Manchec was arrested in 2014 on 49 child pornography charges. Flowers said he left the country to avoid prosecution after posting a nearly \$500,000 bond, and moved to his medieval estate in southern France, the Chateau Pechrigal.

France denied U.S. at-

tempts to extradite him, but he was eventually arrested in the Dominican Republic in 2020, and returned to Florida, according to the sheriff.

Manchec requested permission to leave jail in January, saying he suffered from chronic medical conditions, and because he broke his hip and wrist late last year, the sheriff said. The request was denied.

The escape plot centered on an April 12 medical appointment, Flowers said. But at least one of the people involved tipped off law enforcement, allowing investigators to unravel the plot. An examination of Manchec's jail phone records discovered he used the code words "paint job" while



This photo provided by Indian River County Sheriff's Office shows John Manchec.

Associated Press

talking with his employees about the plot.

They were to prepare his plane, his 140-foot (42-meter) yacht, a black utility van and other vehicles purchased just for the escape attempt, Flowers

said. Manchec even paid the bail for a cellmate, and then allowed them to live in his home. That person helped prepare for the escape, down to packing a suitcase, and his favorite liquor, the sheriff said. □

Blinken warns rival Sudanese generals to respect latest truce

By SAMY MAGDY

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday warned Sudan's rival generals to abide by the latest cease-fire or face possible sanctions, as residents reported sporadic fighting between the sides in the capital of Khartoum and a northern city.

Sudan descended into chaos after fighting erupted in mid-April between the country's military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo.

The fighting has killed at least 863 civilians, including at least 190 children, and wounded more than 3,530 others, according to the Doctors' Syndicate, which tracks civilian casualties. The toll could be much higher, the medical group said. The conflict has also turned Khartoum and other urban areas into battlefields. Early on, foreign governments raced to evacuate their diplomats and nationals as thousands of foreign residents scrambled to get out of Sudan.

More than a million Sudanese have been forced from their homes by the fighting, including over



Nigerians who were evacuated from Sudan arrive at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja, Nigeria, Friday, May 5, 2023.

840,000 who have sought shelter in safer parts of the country, and another 250,000 crossed into neighboring countries, according to the U.N. figures.

Over the past weeks, the United States and Saudi Arabia have been mediating in talks between the warring sides, held in the kingdom. A new truce was announced over the weekend — the seventh attempt so far to stop the deadly violence in the East African nation. It went into effect on Monday night. All previous cease-fires have been

violated.

In a video message posted by the U.S. Embassy on social media early Tuesday, Blinken said the fighting has been "tragic, senseless and devastating."

The truce, he said, is meant to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance and restore essential services and infrastructure destroyed in the clashes.

A remote mechanism, backed by the U.S., has been established to monitor the truce, Blinken added — a 12-member monitoring committee consist-

ing of three representatives from the warring sides, three from the U.S., and three from Saudi Arabia.

"If the cease-fire is violated, we'll know and we will hold violators accountable through sanctions and other means," he said. "We facilitated the cease-fire, but it's the responsibility of the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces to implement it."

Both sides agreed to stop hostilities and the looting of civilian properties and humanitarian supplies, as well as seizing civilian infrastruc-

ture such as hospitals, power plants, water pumps, and fuel stations.

Aid workers and civilians have reported widespread looting in Khartoum and elsewhere across the country, along with dire lack of basic services, medical care, food, and water. A doctor's group has also said that the RSF has seized hospitals. Allegations of sexual violence against women, including rape and gang rape in Khartoum and the restive western Darfur region, have also been reported.

Residents, meanwhile, said they heard loud sounds of gunfire and explosions Tuesday in parts of Omdurman, a city next to Khartoum, with military aircraft flying overhead. They also reported sporadic clashes around the military's headquarters in Khartoum.

"Sounds of firefight are very close," said Babakr Abdel-Rahman, an Omdurman resident, speaking over the phone, with loud sounds of gunfire and aircraft heard in the background. "They don't respect people's lives."

Fighting was also reported in the northern city of Obeid, where RSF was said to have attacked the military headquarters and other parts of the city. □

Associated Press

China presses Dutch minister for access to chipmaking tech

By JOE McDONALD

AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's foreign minister pressed his Dutch counterpart Tuesday for access to advanced chipmaking technology that has been blocked on security grounds and warned against allowing what he said were unfounded fears of Beijing to spoil relations.

Chinese frustration with curbs imposed by the Netherlands, Washington and Japan on chip technology has added to political strains at a time when Beijing is threatening to attack Taiwan and is increasingly assertive toward other Asian neighbors.



Dutch Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra, center, and his Chinese counterpart Qin Gang, right, arrive to hold a joint news conference following their meeting in Beijing, China, Tuesday May 23, 2023.

Associated Press

There was no indication the Netherlands changed its restriction on the supply of lithography machines available only from a single

Dutch company that use ultraviolet light to etch tiny circuits on next-generation processor chips. Lack of that tool is holding back

Chinese efforts to develop chips for smartphones, artificial intelligence and other advanced applications.

"As for the issue of lithography machines, China has serious concerns about this," Qin Gang said at a

joint news conference.

"We should work together to jointly protect the normal trade order between us, the international trade rules and to jointly keep the global industrial and supply chains stable." □




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Aid agency chief: Taliban say guidelines on female NGO staff resuming work close to finalization

By **RIAZAT BUTT**
Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) —

The head of a major international aid agency said Tuesday that key Taliban officials told him in meetings that they are close to finalizing guidelines that will allow Afghan women to resume working for non-governmental organizations. But they were unable to give a timeline or details when pressed.

The Taliban last December barred Afghan women from working at NGOs, allegedly because they were not wearing the hijab — the Islamic headscarf — correctly and were not observing gender segregation rules. In April, they said this ban extended to U.N. offices and agencies in Afghanistan. There are exemptions in some sectors like health care and education.

Days before the NGO order came into effect, the Taliban barred women from universities, having already stopped girls from going to school beyond sixth grade. Last November, women were banned from public spaces, including parks.

In January, the Taliban said they were working on guidelines for women to return to work at NGOs. They previously said they were working on guidelines so that girls and young women could return to educa-



Jan Egeland, the secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, meets with the head of Kandahar's Economy Directorate, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Baryali in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on Monday, May 22, 2023.

Associated Press

tion but these have yet to materialize.

Jan Egeland, the secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, is visiting Afghanistan for the second time in five months to persuade the country's Taliban rulers to reverse the ban on the organization's female staff. Egeland met the Kandahar deputy governor, Maulvi Hayatullah Mubarak, who he described as having "direct contact with and links" to the Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, who ordered the education and

NGO bans. He also met the head of Kandahar's Economy Directorate, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Baryali.

"The authorities in Kandahar have a special position since the emir (Akhundzada) sits in Kandahar," he told The Associated Press. "Whatever agreement we can get in Kandahar can have a national impact. These guidelines are close to being finalized and should soon be put into effect, that is what was conveyed."

Egeland said he pressed the Taliban officials for a

timeline and clarity on the word "soon" but they didn't elaborate.

He was told the Taliban couldn't guarantee anything as everything needed to be put to the supreme leadership. They also told him they had been working on the NGO matter for months and that most issues have been resolved. The guidelines are likely to cover dress codes, gender segregation in the workplace, and a chaperone for travel. Egeland warned that it would not be a lifting of the ban if the guidelines

went beyond that.

The Norwegian Refugee Council stands to lose 40% of its funding for Afghanistan because of the bans on female employment and education, he said.

He said the potential loss meant a 40% drop in the number of people reached. The agency has also laid off 220 of its 1,500 workforce and closed five offices. But it retains male and female Afghan staff who are unable to work because of the bans. The agency is not deploying male-only teams.

"I believe their promises," he said of the Taliban. "But I can only accept the facts."

Abdul Rahman Habib, a spokesman for the Economy Ministry, said it was too early to talk about the NGO guidelines.

"If it comes from another source we are not responsible for it," he said. "We are the only source for confirmation. When the time is right we will announce it officially." The Taliban have repeatedly told senior humanitarian officials visiting Afghanistan since December that the NGO restrictions are temporary suspensions, not a ban.

But the order is being actively enforced by the country's intelligence agency, which reports to the Taliban's leadership in Kandahar. □



In this photo provided by Guyana's Department of Public Information, the dormitory of a secondary school is burned in Mahdia, Guyana, Monday, May 22, 2023.

Associated Press

By **BERT WILKINSON**
Associated Press

GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP) — Investigators in Guy-

Guyana girls' dorm fire was deliberately set by student

ana believe a fire that killed 19 mostly girls trapped in a school dormitory was deliberately set by a student who was upset that her mobile phone was confiscated, a top official said Tuesday.

The suspect in the fire late Sunday, who is among several injured people, had been disciplined by the dorm administrator for having an affair with an older man, National Security Adviser Gerald Gouveia said. The student allegedly

threatened to torch the dorm and later set a fire in a bathroom area, Gouveia said.

The fire raced through the wood, concrete and iron-grilled building after it had been locked for the night by the dorm administrator — or house mother — to prevent the girls from sneaking out, Gouveia said.

"She did this out of love for them. She felt she was forced to do so because many of them leave the

building at night to socialize," Gouveia told The Associated Press. "This is a very sad situation, but the state is going to work with the students and the families to provide all the support they need."

All but one of the victims were Indigenous girls aged 12 to 18 from remote villages served by the boarding school in Mahdia, a mining community near the Brazil border. The remaining victim was the five-year-old son of the house mother. □

Megan Rojer: "Volunteer work needs to be done from the heart"

ORANJESTAD – Megan Rojer has different facets to her life: entrepreneur, model, actress and volunteer at various foundations, among which, Nine Lives Aruba Foundation dedicated to the rescue of cats. She says that help is always welcome at a foundation.

Rojer was born in the United States, but from a young age her parents brought her to Aruba and she was raised here. She completed secondary school (HAVO) and decided to find her way at first in the Netherlands and then in the United States, where she completed her bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts & Creative Writing and began working in marketing.

Currently she is focused on her own company, Floria Creative House, where she assists other businesses and projects with their creative development and marketing strategies. "If it's something creative I love it. I like having creativity in my life and helping people develop in this area, guiding them in the right direction with their project to make it more attractive and more beautiful," she says.

Aside from always being present in creativity, Rojer also serves as a volunteer at different organizations, one aspect of her life that began when she was a teenager and belonged to the International Order of the Rainbow for Girls, a non-profit international organization for service and leadership for young girls in Aruba. "There I was introduced to the world of volunteering and I liked it. When I do it I feel really good that



I can help people one way

or another, or help a cause like animals," Rojer said.



She has been a volunteer at Nine Lives Aruba Foundation since 2019. The foundation is dedicated to saving the life of street cats, and sometimes they also rescue some dogs. They promote the humane treatment of animals to prevent cruelty and abandonment.

She also tells us that she vol-

unteer at Aru Coder Dojo, a computer club for kids at the National Library of Aruba once a month. She also participates in other projects for artists in need, like ArtFashion, in the production of a short film called "Bis'e of no bis'e" (To tell or not to tell), in video shoot for clothing brands, and tour companies, among others.

She considers that "volunteer work is something that needs to be done from the heart" without expecting anything in return. "The person is supposed to have a good heart, and when you commit to something, you have to do it 100%. I have been in situations where people are supposed to help in a project or as a volunteer and they just leave and you're left with the work of two people. You're doing it to help the group, but don't let people down. If you want to volunteer do it all the way."

From her time in Nine Lives Aruba Foundation, what she likes the most are the cats, which are her favorite animal. She also enjoys spending time with the other members of the foundation, who are "amazing. They have their strong character, but all for a good cause and I like that. Nine Lives Aruba Foundation is the only foundation focused on cats, if I'm not mistaken, they rescue, foster, and I always feel bad that people leave the street cats forgotten," Rojer said.

She feels that being a volun-



teer has helped her develop as a person as well, someone who doesn't understand that there are people who mistreat animals. "Just feel compassion, for others, for animals. The foundations are always the ones in most need of help, and regarding this, Nine Lives is always at full capacity for fostering cats. They always need more people to foster and help is always welcome. If someone is interested in helping and doesn't know how to start, just contact the foundations."

In closing, Rojer has a message to our readers: "Life will always have its ups and downs and I think it is super important for you as a person to remember to prioritize your mental health throughout your journey. This can mean to be aware of the people close to you that you consider your support system, time to properly unwind and de-stress, and also to do fun things that make you laugh. You achieve a lot more when your mental health is well taken care of." □



Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Barcelo Aruba



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently recognized Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. Presenting the Ambassadors with the Goodwill certificate as a token of appreciation.

The honoring certification program is granted to ambassadors, to recognize, the loyalty, friendships, and visits to Aruba. For consecutively choosing Aruba as their preferred vacation destination each year. The Honoring certification program has three levels, which are divided according to the number of consecutive years visiting the island of Aruba.

Honoring Levels: Distinguished Ambassadors: 10> years
Goodwill Ambassadors: 20> years
Emerald Ambassadors: 35> years

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Vic & Gina Merrill residents of Michigan, United States (have been visiting Aruba for 20 years consecutively).

Ms. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of the Barcelo Aruba bestowed the certification of the Ambassadors of Aruba. The honorees were presented with the official certificate, and with memorable gifts.

On behalf of the Government of Aruba, we would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to all the Ambassadors for making Aruba their preferred vacation destination for so many years. We are so thankful to have had such wonderful Ambassadors as our visitors after all these years! Aruba is unquestionably their home away from home!

According to Honorees these are the top reasons for returning to Aruba:

Vic & Gina Merrill reasons:

Weather
Safety
People of Aruba
Out of the Hurricane belt
A wide range of food options ☐

Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Playa Linda Beach Resort



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently recognized Emerald Ambassadors of Aruba. Presenting the Ambassadors with the Emerald certificate as a token of appreciation.

The honoring certification program is granted to ambassadors, to recognize, the loyalty, friendships, and visits to Aruba. For consecutively choosing Aruba as their preferred vacation destination each year. The Honoring certification program has three levels, which are divided according to the number of consecutive years visiting the island of Aruba.

Honoring Levels:
Distinguished Ambassadors: 10> years
Goodwill Ambassadors: 20> years
Emerald Ambassadors: 35> years

Honoree were: Emerald Ambassadors 35> years:

Edmund & Suzanne Spadaccino residents of Pennsylvania, United States (have been visiting Aruba for 35 years consecutively).

Ms. Olga Ruiz representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of Playa Linda Beach Resort bestowed the certification of the Ambassadors of Aruba. The honorees were presented with the official certificate, and with memorable gifts.

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According to Honorees these are the top reasons for returning to Aruba:

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Great Weather
Family & Friends
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Joanne and John renew their vows on our beautiful island



Joanne and John Pellegrino came to the absolute only place on earth they could image to celebrate their 25th anniversary.

On May 17, 2023 at Renaissance Wind Creek Aruba Resort, Joanne and John strolled the property remembering the first time they traveled here together so many years ago. They walked out to the ocean, upon the bridge, to reaffirm the commitment they

made to one another 25 years ago.

They honeymooned here and have visited every year since, and often twice a year. This is truly their "home away from home". Ed and Ginny Madden Kildoye, longtime Aruba visitors, were kind enough to photograph and document their special evening. Renaissance Wind Creek Aruba Resort made the evening even more special by sending balloons, a cake and champagne to the happy couple.

Their love story started in early 1997 when Joanne stepped into John's Barber Shop for a haircut and her life changed forever. They fell in love and stayed there. Many times they have brought their children to the island and have made many friends and

memories here.

Joanne and a John live at the Jersey Shore and love boating, the sand, the sea and the sunshine. John is now retired and has closed his shop, but Joanne continues her environmental work as a Federal Port Agent with NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). They love spending their free time together and with their children, family, and friends. □



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beauty & THE BEACH

Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Pete and John from New York**. All they can say is: "We're gonna be famous!" and "we love it!" Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!

This segment is sponsored by Alhambra Casino and Shops.



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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Ocean Threats

Episode CCVII – 207

Aruba is a highly demanded tourist destination with a fragile ecosystem on a very small piece of earth, covering thousands of years of human history and millions in geological terms. Our native heritage teaches us to love and value the little things of life we have when living on an island; our greatest desire becomes to protect and preserve them with all our might. Here is where our main objective comes to mind: educating our visiting readers about Aruba's cultural heritage.

Colorful marine life, exotic fish, coral reefs, sea turtles, etc. were part of our underwater landscape that you could enjoy with simple snorkel gear. It was so common to see seashells, sand dollars, and hundreds of starfish; the red Caribbean starfish's bright color would contrast perfectly with the sand below the blue. We did enjoy a daily biodiversity, which in recent years has suffered alarming consequences caused by the carelessness, exploitation, and ignorance of consumers.

Until recently, attention to biodiversity was focused on rainforests due to the constant discovery of new species, the potential uses of their genetic diversity, and their gradual disappearance.

Thankfully, in recent years, interest in marine biodiversity has received more attention.

Although there is no consensus among scientists about the estimation of biodiversity in general, it is recognized not only that it is essential for the survival of the human species but also that it is in serious danger due to multiple human activities. The estimates made are subject to constant changes as a result of the discovery of new species and the systematic reorganization of existing ones, as well as the increase in scientific effort, the exploration of new areas, and the incorporation of new identification and analysis technologies.

It is recognized that the marine environment contains complex and biodiverse ecosystems such as coral reefs, seagrass beds, macro algae, mangrove forests which provide essential uses and services for a large part of the human population. Based on evidence from modern and fossil records, it has been suggested



that marine species tend to have consistently lower rates of extinction in both geological and ecological time.

This statement has been related to the buffer capacity of the marine environment, in which it is possible to better withstand any type of alteration, allowing marine species to tend to be less prone to extinction processes than terrestrial species. However, different factors in marine and coastal ecosystems are causing an increase in the rate of decline of species and degradation of these ecosystems, which has been reflected in diseases, local extinctions of species, the decline of some populations, and the homogenization of communities.

Human activities and unregulated exploitation have changed our submarine landscapes dramatically while diminishing the population of local species. Overfishing, pollution, the introduction of non-native species, and global changes such as climate change and ocean acidification are the main threats to marine biodiversity today. We have a dump that rolls into the sea, black waters, plastics, suntan, engine oil, and drifting garbage all along our northern coast.

Among the main pollutants affecting the ocean are oil spills, untreated sewage discharge, industrial pollutants, solid waste, and pesticides.

On the other hand, overexploitation of fishing resources leads to the local or regional extinction of many species. In coastal environments, overexploitation is the first cause of the extinction of ma-

rine biodiversity, which affects the entire ecosystem. This situation has become particularly evident in coral reefs, which are the most diverse and complex marine ecosystems and home to thousands of species.

The eutrophication of coastal waters causes blooms of green macro algae, which can damage different organisms. Harmful algal blooms float to the surface in "foam" and deplete oxygen in the water. Some species of algae produce toxins that alter cellular processes in other organisms, from plankton to humans. The most severe and memorable effects are the massive mortality of fish, birds, and mammals (including humans), and they have a negative impact on marine biodiversity and coastal ecosystems.

If you love to know everything about Aruba, do something off the "tourist grid" and surprise yourself by visiting Etnia Nativa, a private residential museum and unique place that introduces you to an authentic glimpse of the island's cultural heritage.

Since 1994, Etnia Nativa has been the home of Anthony, a native artist and "Island-Insight" blogger who guides each visitor through resplendent collections from his family heritage dating back to 1640, when the Dutch occupation began. Visit it and feel the true native effect! <https://www.arubatoday.com/category/columns/island-insight/>

R.S.V.P. WhatsApp +297 592 2702 or mail etnianativa03@gmail.com.

Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the same, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with only one way to generate profit at the time for the sub existence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment, as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experiences by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and enter-



taining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays after church.

Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the 1940s, there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the econom-

ic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary life on the island began to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piternella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelkboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works.

The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a

cultural consciousness in the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamentu, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/Dera Gai (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Long skirt
- 5 Mensa entrance requirement
- 11 Pastoral poem
- 12 Swain
- 13 Cry out
- 14 Feeling friendless
- 15 Moody music
- 16 "West Side Story" gang
- 17 Full moon, for one
- 19 Texas's Houston
- 22 Detest
- 24 Comet's place
- 26 Steel ingredient
- 27 Way to go
- 28 Skating sites
- 30 Eggs on
- 31 Look upon
- 32 Keep busy
- 34 Lively quality
- 35 Question of method
- 38 Fled
- 41 Valentine word
- 42 Peter of "Troy"
- 43 Till section
- 44 More heartfelt
- 45 Campout sight

DOWN

- 1 Cats' quarries
- 2 Cain's father
- 3 Marimba's kin
- 4 Suffering
- 5 Archipelago
- 6 Brokers' numbers
- 7 Sardine holders
- 8 Summer in Lyons
- 9 Costa del —
- 10 Take a stab at
- 16 Pickle purchase
- 18 Gagglesound
- 19 Jazz instrument

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Yesterday's answer

- 20 Litmus reddener
- 21 Citi Field team
- 22 Melodies
- 23 Gooney cheese
- 25 Andean nation
- 29 Suppress
- 30 Coat rack
- 33 Surmise
- 34 Tear along
- 36 Roasting spot
- 37 Sunset site
- 38 Join the crew
- 39 One — time
- 40 Neither follower
- 41 Auction buy

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| 42 | | | | | | 43 | | | |
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5-24

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-24

CRYPTOQUOTE

P CL MGR C HDEVGM RG XD

HEDVVOEDK — XT CMTXGKT

GE CMT MCRPGM. — PMKPEC

FCMKZP

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: ALL I CAN DO IS

UPS strike looms in a world grown reliant on everything delivered everywhere all the time

By M. OTT/H. HADERO
AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Living in New York City, working full time and without a car, Jessica Ray and her husband have come to rely on deliveries of food and just about everything else for their home. It has meant more free time on week-ends with their young son, rather than standing in line for toilet paper or dragging heavy bags of dog food back to their apartment.

"I don't even know where to buy dog food," said Jessica Ray of the specialty food she buys for the family's aging dog.

There are millions of families like the Rays who have swapped store visits for doorstep deliveries in recent years, meaning that contentious labor negotiations now underway at UPS could become vastly more disruptive than the last time it happened in 1997, when a scrappy upstart called Amazon.com became a public company.

UPS delivers millions more packages every day than it did just five years ago and its 350,000 unionized workers, represented by the Teamsters, still seethe about a contract they feel was forced on them in 2018. In an environment of energized labor movements and lingering resentment among UPS workers, the Teamsters are expected to dig in, with the potential to cow a major logistical force in the U.S.

The 24 million packages UPS ships on an average day amounts to about a quarter of all U.S. parcel volume, according to the global shipping and logis-



A United Parcel Service driver pilots his truck, in New York, Thursday, May 11, 2023.

Associated Press

tics firm Pitney Bowes, or as UPS puts it, the equivalent of about 6% of nation's gross domestic product. Higher prices and long wait times are all but certain if there is an impasse.

"Something's got to give," said Thomas Goldsby, logistics chairman in the Supply Chain Management Department at the University of Tennessee. "The python can't swallow the alligator, and that's going to be felt by all of us."

In other words, brace yourself for Supply Chain Breakdown: The Sequel.

In the second half of 2021, the phrase "global supply chain" began to enter casual conversations as the world emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses struggled to get what they needed, raising prices and wait times. Automakers held vehicles just off the assembly line because they didn't have all the parts. Some of those problems still linger and a strike at UPS threatens to extend the suffering.

Those who have come to rely on doorstep deliveries for the basic may have to

rethink weekly schedules.

"We finally reached a point where we finally feel pretty good about it," Ray said. "We can take a Saturday afternoon and do a fun family activity and not feel the burden of making everything work for the day-to-day functioning of our household."

UPS workers feel they have played a part in the transformation of how Americans shop since the last contract was ratified in 2018, while helping to make UPS a much more valuable company.

Annual profits at UPS in the past two years are close to three times what they were before the pandemic. The Atlanta company returned about \$8.6 billion to shareholders in the form of dividends and stock buybacks in 2022, and forecasts another \$8.4 billion for shareholders this year.

The Teamsters say frontline UPS workers deserve some of that windfall.

"Our members worked really hard over the pandemic," said Teamsters spokesperson Kara Denize. "They need to see their fair share." □

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Q&A: Liv Ullmann, cinema royalty and major Cannes draw, looks back

By JAKE COYLE

AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — Very few are capable of capturing people's attention at the Cannes Film Festival like Liv Ullmann.

At 84, Ullmann is unabashed cinema royalty, and directors have flocked to greet her at this year's festival. Pedro Almodóvar sought her out at a luncheon. Todd Haynes endeavored to get word to her that his latest film, "May December," is inspired by "Persona," the 1966 film that began her decade with Ingmar Bergman.

After meeting Ullmann, "The Zone of Interest" director Jonathan Glazer pressed his hand against his chest to catch his breath.

Ullmann has been coming to Cannes longer than she can remember. She's pretty sure there's a hotel suite somewhere named after her. But after being here in just about every capacity — with "Cries and Whispers" in 1973, her own "Faithless" in 2000, president of the jury in 2001 — she was in Cannes for a different reason. Dheeraj Akolkar's documentary series, "Liv Ullmann: A Road Less Travelled," played in the Cannes Classics section.

"I've never been here when someone else has made a movie about me or my life," says Ullmann. "That makes it so different and maybe a little shameful, somehow. Because I'm an actress and a director."

In an interview, the Norwegian actor, who lives in Boston, reflected on the passing of time and her halcyon decade with Bergman, one of cinema's great collaborations. Ullmann starred in 10 of Bergman's films, including "Scenes From a Marriage" and "Saraband," and she directed two of his screenplays. "A Road Less Travelled" streams on Viaplay beginning June 22nd.

AP: Having been such a central part of arthouse heyday when filmmakers like Bergman, Godard and Truffaut were such a part of culture, do you ever lament that today's most daring



Liv Ullmann poses for portrait photographs for the television series 'Liv Ullmann: A Road Less Travelled' at the 76th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Saturday, May 20, 2023. Associated Press

movies seem to reside less in the spotlight?

ULLMANN: They make incredible movies now. You know, I saw Cate Blanchett last year. What an actress. Art, it's made today. But so many other films are also reflection of this time. And I mean, everything that won Oscars this year, I didn't even understand them all. It doesn't mean that there's something wrong with them or there's anything wrong with me.

I sometimes miss that there aren't more of the movies we used to call classical. That's about aging, too, maybe. What I'm most nervous for is that all these serials that are everywhere is removing us so far from what film really was. The art of the lighting, the art of the cinematographer, the art of the director — that kind of language. I like where I came from.

AP: How clearly do you remember meeting Bergman?

ULLMANN: Bibi Andersson, who was my best friend and we had done some movies together, I visited her in Sweden. We were walking on the street, and that's where Ingmar came and spoke with her. He knew who I was because I had filmed a lot. He said, "Oh, well, I'd like you to be in one of my films." And so maybe that's why I also experienced everything (in film) more personally because it happened like that, Ingmar and me.

AP: He was immediately struck by you in that meeting, but what was your first impression of him?

ULLMANN: Oh, I was so impressed. I'm shy and then I was really shy. I never spoke. When he said he wanted me in one of his movies, I was shocked. Luckily, I

didn't have any lines in the movie. It's strange he did that with me because I was 25. I was young. I see the movie as about him having reached middle age and wanting to stop life and go into himself. Then he picked me. I was him. And I think I was him in many of the movies. We were not alike each other but in certain ways we were. There is a reason he then used me continually until he died.

AP: How would you describe how deep your connection was?

ULLMANN: He said that. You and I are painfully connected. We lived together for five years but maybe the most wonderful connection was when we lived separately. We became more connected that way. I came to Fårö (the island he lived on) the night he died and he was already on his way.

AP: Did you share any words on his death bed?

ULLMANN: He was already on his way. One thing I did say. The last film we did together was "Saraband." That's about a woman who comes to her husband many years after it's over. And he asks her, "Why did you come to me?" She says, "You called for me." When I was sitting there on the bed, I said, "If you're wondering why I'm here, you called for me." He may have heard that, I don't know.

AP: You've often been described as his "muse" but that doesn't seem the right word for your collaboration.

ULLMANN: I don't think I was a muse but you can say that. I did a lot of things that he wanted to do that he didn't do. I traveled. I went into the world. I became famous. The strange thing with all these actors who he loved dearly, he didn't like them to go. Bibi Andersson and Max von Sydow. But he thought it was fun with me. I don't know why. When I did "A Doll's House," he came to New York. He hated to travel. He enjoyed what I did. There was so much I got to do because I wasn't him, and maybe he would have loved to do. All his seriousness, of course that wasn't me.

AP: You consider yourself at heart a theater actor, but what was your relationship to the camera? In the documentary, Blanchett says you were "looking up at the world sort of with a face of unconditional love."

ULLMANN: If you're really close to somebody you love, when you look at each other, you know everything about each other. I see the camera that way. I don't have to be shy. You are an actor from the inside. Your soul, your your heart can come out if you want to show the camera the real truth. It tells what is under there. It's nothing you can act or do Stanislavski about. It's not your brain. Your brain is not the actor. It's from here (points to heart). If you relax your body, the camera will take it. □

LeBron questions retirement after Lakers are eliminated

By GREG BEACHAM

AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeBron James questioned retirement after his Lakers were swept by the Denver Nuggets despite the highest-scoring postseason half of James' matchless NBA career.

James set a personal record with 31 points in the first half of Game 4 of the Western Conference finals on Monday night, but he missed two potential tying shots in the final minute as the Nuggets ended the Lakers' season with a 113-111 victory.

The 38-year-old James finished with 40 points, 10 rebounds, nine assists and immense frustration after Los Angeles' remarkable late-season surge ended with four consecutive defeats. Although the top scorer in NBA history spoke about himself as part of the Lakers next season, James also said he hasn't made up his mind on retirement.

"We'll see what happens going forward," James said in the final answer of his postgame news conference. "I don't know. I don't know. I've got a lot to think about, to be honest. Just for me personally going forward with the game of basketball, I've got a lot to think about."

James is under contract for



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James looks down in the closing minutes of a loss to the Denver Nuggets in the second half of Game 4 of the NBA basketball Western Conference Final series Monday, May 22, 2023, in Los Angeles.

\$46.9 million next season with the Lakers, but he is in charge of his future after surpassing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's career scoring record earlier this year. He hasn't previously suggested much personal conflict about finishing his contract alongside Anthony Davis, and his play hasn't significantly declined after two decades in the NBA — although his health has grown less sturdy, particularly in his balky feet and ankles. "It's all about availability for me and keeping my mind sharp, and things of that nature," James said.

"Being present on the floor, being present in the locker room and bus rides and plane rides, things of that nature. It's challenging, for sure. It was a very challenging season for me, for our ballclub, and obviously we know whatever went on early on (in the Lakers' 2-10 start to the season). It was cool, a pretty cool ride." James missed a month of the regular season with a foot injury down the stretch, but he returned with a series of stellar playoff performances while the Lakers knocked off second-seeded Memphis

and eliminated defending champion Golden State. That didn't matter much to James, whose frustration broke through at several points after Game 4.

"I don't like to say it's a successful year, because I don't play for anything besides winning championships at this point in my career," James said. "You know, I don't get a kick out of making a conference (finals) appearance. I've done it a lot, and it's not fun to me to not be able to be a part of getting to the (NBA) Finals."

In his NBA-record 282nd ca-

reer playoff game, James dropped 21 points in a dynamic first quarter in Game 4. He added 10 more in the second while playing nearly the entire half of a do-or-die game against the top-seeded Nuggets.

But James had only nine points on 4-of-12 shooting in the second half, and he missed two chances to score in the final minute. He took a strange fallaway jumper that missed badly with 26 seconds left, and his final drive to the hoop was thwarted by Denver's Jamal Murray and Aaron Gordon at the buzzer.

But the first half was vintage LeBron: He made 11 of his 13 shots and hit four 3-pointers without a miss in the highest-scoring playoff half of his career, which began in 2003 and has included four NBA championships. James added four rebounds and four assists, and he also got a technical foul after a physical exchange with Gordon when the two got locked up on the Lakers' end of the court. James had struggled from distance previously in the series, going 3 for 19 in the first three games. He fixed his shot in Game 4 — and he even got credit for a 3-pointer in the first quarter when his lob pass to Rui Hachimura accidentally went in the basket. □

NFL expects kickoff return reduction with trial of fair catch rule

By DAVE CAMPBELL

AP Pro Football Writer

EAGAN, Minn. (AP) — The NFL has pushed the kickoff return further toward irrelevance with a priority on player safety.

League owners voted Tuesday for a one-year trial of an enhanced touchback rule that will give the receiving team the ball at its own 25 with a fair catch of a kickoff anywhere behind that yard line.

The proposal passed despite an expression of distaste for it from coaches and players across the league. They argued the rule change will create uglier plays with squib and

corner kicks that are impossible for fair catches.

"I've been in this for a long time. I've seen these type of health and safety discussions," said Atlanta Falcons chief executive officer Rich McKay, who is chairman of the competition committee. "We tend to get ourselves to the right place, but it's never that comfortable."

The NFL said its statistical models predict the return rate for kickoffs in 2023, under the new rule, will drop from 38% to 31% and that the rate of concussions on the sport's most dangerous play will be reduced by 15%. Concussions on kick-

offs occur more than twice as often as on plays from scrimmage, and that rate has risen significantly over the last two years.

One reason for the recent increase in head injuries? The improved skill of kickers to be able to strategically hang the ball longer and higher in front of the goal line, allowing the coverage more time to make a tackle and keep the opponent's drive start deeper than the 25 for an end-zone touchback.

The NFL essentially copied a rule that was already in place in college football.

"We needed to do something," McKay said. "We just



Green Bay Packers cornerback Keisean Nixon (25) runs back a kickoff for a touchdown during an NFL football game against the Minnesota Vikings Sunday, Jan. 1, 2023, in Green Bay, Wis.

Associated Press

can't sit there and ignore that data." □

